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The More Things Change . . .

I read two stories about teachers recently which have gotten me thinking about the role and status of the teacher in American society.

The first tale relates the all too familiar story of a young man who enters his first classroom with a starry-eyed vision of what teaching will be. Remembering the fierce and distant teachers of his youth, he imagines winning the love and respect of his students through his gentle, caring manner. He anticipates being “overwhelmed with the gratitude” of his pupils’ parents as he shares his knowledge and works to equip their children for full lives of useful citizenship.

The next part you can guess: he finds himself overworked, underappreciated, and undercompensated. Rather than the love and esteem of his students, amidst the “incessant clamor” of the classroom, he receives constant evidence of their disrespect. The situation comes to a head when a student directly challenges his authority in front of the entire classroom. The young teacher firmly disciplines the offending student, only to find his authority further undermined when the pupil’s father storms into his classroom, angrily confronts him, then spreads a distorted version of the incident throughout the community.

Not surprisingly, our hero does not last long as a teacher.

The second account reads much like the first. A beginning teacher moves to a new community, intent on molding minds and touching lives. He, too, is met with recalcitrant students disdainful of all authority. He soon concludes that “they had come to regard the whole world as divided into two classes, the teacher on one side representing lawful authority, and the pupils on the other in a state of chronic rebellion.” Challenged at every turn by students unprepared by home and previous experience to succeed academically and facing the constraints of a system more intent on minimizing expenditure than on maximizing student achievement, this young teacher finds each day a continual battle.

Reluctant and rebellious students, poor home environments, parents who not only fail to support schools but actively undermine teachers’ authority, inexperienced and underpaid teachers working in inadequate facilities and asked to cope with a host of societal ills—these two stories seem to me to exemplify the many obstacles facing teachers today. The first appears in Royall Tyler’s novel *The Algerine Captive*, published two hundred years ago; the second forms the basis of Edward Eggleston’s 1871 novel, *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

These stories serve two purposes for me. First, they warn against the danger of lapsing into the kind of hazy, lazy, nostalgic thinking

which distorts too much of the discussion on education in this country.

Characterized by statements containing the always pejorative phrase “students today,” this kind of nostalgia avoids careful analysis of what can and should be done to improve our schools by drifting off into reverie about some imagined “golden age” when students were disciplined, respectful, and eager to learn.

Unarguably, certain societal trends in recent decades have added greatly to the challenges facing teachers. Not least of these have been changes in economic and family structures, which have created more single-parent families and left many parents with fewer hours with their children. Nonetheless, I’m deeply suspicious whenever anyone claims that “students today aren’t what they used to be.” I suspect they never were. Interestingly, it generally turns out that “used to be” refers to a time in the recent past when the speaker was the age of the students he’s describing.

Reading the misadventures of Tyler’s Updike Underhill and Eggleston’s Ralph Hartsook further serves to remind me of the continuing scandal of the low status of teachers in American society. I remember in the early years of my career being asked what I did for a living and proudly responding, “I teach.” I was often astonished to discover that the person I had just met was not impressed by my profession. Teaching had always seemed to me the noblest of callings and I was nonplused to find that much of the American public does not see our vocation in that light. I sometimes fear that the

status of teachers has not changed much since 1776, when the *Maryland Journal* advertised that a ship had just arrived from Ireland bearing “various Irish commodities, among which are school masters, beef, pork, and potatoes.”

Of course, none of us entered teaching in pursuit of status. But as we focus on our ministry among students whose minds and lives we seek to touch (sometimes despite their best efforts to remain unaltered by the experience), we could all use a little affirmation at times.

A couple of weeks ago I was in a high school English classroom. Taped up behind the teacher’s desk, I found a quotation from a third teacher of long ago. Luther’s words suggest an antidote to the continuing challenges teachers face. We will never return to that mythical golden age when students were uniformly eager and cooperative and teachers were universally held in high esteem, but Luther reminds us of the value of what Christian teachers do everyday:

“An industrious and pious school master or teacher who faithfully trains and educates [children] can never be sufficiently recompensed, and no money will pay him. Yet the calling is shamefully despised among us, as if it were nothing, and at the same time we pretend to be Christians! If I had to give up preaching in my duties, there is no office that I would rather have than that of school teacher . . . Therefore let it be considered one of the highest virtues on earth to faithfully train the children of others . . . But we must consider, not how the world esteems and rewards it, but how God looks upon it.”✠

Mentoring: A Ministry for Educators

The Rev. Jerry M. Kosberg is Director of the Department of Evangelism Ministry of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

She was a frightened young mother to be. Newly married under "strange" circumstances, her life had been catapulted into astounding challenges and changes. The messenger of God pointed this young woman to an older woman, a woman who could support her, encourage her, be an example to her, counsel her, and guide her. Mary was sent to Elizabeth (Luke 1:36-40). This was spiritual mentoring. Years later the Apostle Paul would write to a young pastor named Titus and, by the inspiration of the Spirit, point all women to this godly model of mentoring. He wrote, "Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women" (Titus 2:3-9).

The Apostle Paul was lovingly mentored by Barnabas (Acts 9:27, 11:26, etc.). Paul himself grew to be a mentor to many. He guided Silas, Timothy, Titus, Luke, and many others. He held himself up as an example, writing, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put into practice . . ." (Philippians 4:9).

Our Lord Jesus is the greatest example of a mentor.

His whole life was one of investing himself in the lives of others.

When I graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1972, I was placed in a wonderful little rural community in northeast Kansas. It was a wonderful place to begin learning the joys and challenges of pastoral ministry. Seventeen miles up the road from me was a pastor 12 years my senior. He was a powerful evangelist with a passion for the lost. He became my mentor. He taught me how to schedule my week and how to prepare for Bible classes, take notes on textual studies for sermons, make calls, and do

evangelism. Especially, he molded me to think about the lost in my community. He guided me to be an evangelist. Today I serve as the Director of Evangelism for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. I believe in the ministry of mentoring. I believe it is one of the ways God guides, grows, and encourages his people. I also believe almost everyone should have a mentor and many people can be mentors.

The Heart of Mentoring

Mentoring is not an easy thing to describe. It takes many forms. Mentoring is investing yourself in the life of someone else so that she can be

supported, encouraged and guided to be all God is calling her to be. Mentoring is not being a master. It is being a servant. Mentoring is not staying on someone's back until he does what you want. It is staying by his side until he gets where he has decided he wants to go.

Mentors play a number of roles in the life of the learner. A mentor could be a teacher, a sponsor, a host, an example, or a counselor. Or, she could be a bit of all of these.

One good analogy to mentoring is being a guide on a journey. The mentor doesn't tell the other person what the destiny should be. The mentor/guide helps the traveler chart the best path to the destination. The guide helps the learner decide what would be useful to take along and what should be left behind. Because the guide has already traveled part of this road, she can help the traveler steer clear of bad turns and pot holes along the way. But the guide does not take the journey for the traveler. The guide does not make the decisions for the traveler. The guide only points out the way, helps clarify the options, and encourages the traveler to stick with it when the journey gets long and difficult.

A Type of Mentoring We Are Not Talking about Here

There are several types of mentoring, valid in themselves, which we are not talking about in this article. First there is the "occasional mentor." This is someone you informally check in with from time to time. You may call him once a year, or stop by to see him. You may be much comforted knowing he is there for you and, in a sense, rely on him to "mentor" you. Though that is very valid, it is not the kind of intentional, one on one, accountability in mentoring we are talking about here.

Secondly, there is the "passive mentor." This is someone you choose as a model and mentor, even though you may never have met. Maybe it is an author or a public figure about whom you have read and from whom you have learned. It might even be someone long dead. I know someone who has considered C. S. Lewis to be his "mentor." Now this person never met Dr. Lewis, was only a youngster when he died, but through his writing Dr. Lewis has "mentored" this friend. That, too, is very valid, but it is not the type of mentoring we are talking about here.

Mentoring as an Intentional Relationship

The crying need of our day is to intentionalize mentoring relationships. Young men and women are entering adulthood, entering marriage, entering parenthood, entering careers, entering

ministry with a need to be mentored. Middle-aged women and men are finding a need to change careers, change roles in their families, or change values, and they need the guidance and support of mentors. The church is challenged today to be a community of faith that prepares people to give and receive the ministry of mentoring.

What Mentors and Learners Bring to Their Relationship

In order for mentoring to be a healthy relationship, both the mentor and the learner need to look honestly at themselves and the needs, values, goals and strengths they bring into that relationship.

What must the learner bring to the relationship? A beginning list would look something include a willingness to

- apply what is being learned;
- reflect on what is being learned and share that learning;
- admire the mentor without idolizing him or her;
- take personal responsibility for their own growth;
- be committed to the mentoring relationship and what it takes;
- be held accountable.

What must the mentor bring to the relationship? A beginning list would look something like this:

- maturity that helps free the mentor from the need to be the master;
- compassion that allows her to hear

- without judging;
- commitment to the relationship and the time it will take;
- respect for the learner and confidentiality;
- reflection on her own journey and the willingness to share that reflection;
- joy in the learner's growth and growing independence.

A healthy mentoring relationship is built on mutual respect and a willingness to share. The learner must not put the mentor on a pedestal nor make the mentor responsible for decisions or growth. The mentor must be willing to guide and be dependable without fostering dependence. It takes some maturity and open communication on the part of both to pull off this delicate balance. You can usually spot a mature, healthy mentor by the way she rejoices in the growth of the learner—even if the learner surpasses her in some ways.

Three Core Functions of Mentoring

There are three core functions to all mentoring: supporting, challenging, and nurturing vision.

First, *support*. People can change to the degree they are supported in making that change. That support will come in a

variety of ways. It will come internally and externally. There will be intellectual support, emotional support, spiritual support, relational support. Different people will need different types and levels of support. Too often we have thought information was enough to change behavior. We put people in a class, teach them some truth, principle, or skill, and expect them to go out and do it. Well, guess what? It doesn't work very well that way. An important ministry in the body of Christ is the support of a mentor.

Mentors support their learners by listening to them, by providing structure when the learner would find that helpful,

by expressing confidence in the learner and affirming her uniqueness.

Second, mentoring means we have to *challenge our learners*. This is often a more difficult task than providing support. The

key in challenging the learner is that the mentor is not imposing her standards or expectations on the learner but is holding the learner to her own standards. Helping the learner set her own goals and holding the learner to those goals is very important. Ways a mentor can challenge

The crying need of our day is to intentionalize mentoring relationships. Young men and women are entering adulthood, entering marriage, entering parenthood, entering careers, entering ministry with a need to be mentored.

the learner include giving assignments, engaging in challenging dialogues, constructing opposing perspectives, and focusing on inconsistencies.

Third, mentoring means *nurturing the vision* in the learner's heart and mind. The mentor has traveled the road. He is living, breathing proof the road can be traveled. By simply being an example, the mentor nurtures the vision in the mind of the learner that this journey is worth attempting. The mentor also can provide a new perspective on the challenges of growth and change. Is the cup half full or half empty? Am I stuck or just struggling with a new phase of the journey? Am I frustrated or just living in the healthy tension of growing? The mentor helps frame the issues in a way that keeps the perspective positive and hopeful. Also, the mentor can provide continuity on the journey. He can point out to the learner how far he has come and how he himself handled those turns in the road when he faced them.

Understanding these three core functions of mentoring and having some simple strategies in mind can give the mentor a road map to follow in the mentoring journey.

Letting Go

How do you know when a mentoring relationship has completed its mission and it is time for both mentor and learner to let go and go on to new chapters of their lives? Unfortunately, there is no one answer to that question. Here are

some signs to watch for that might indicate it is time to let go:

- Does the learner need less and less direction and encouragement?
- Is the learner now a peer with the mentor?
- Does the mentor see less and less need for giving direction?
- Is the learner advanced even beyond the mentor in certain ways?
- Has the learner's need for direction changed in a way the mentor cannot meet?
- Is the relationship evolving into a friendship?

It is important for both learner and mentor to reflect on these questions. As they share their perceptions, it is a good time to affirm how significant and helpful the relationship has been to them. It would also be important to talk about how the relationship can continue to evolve into more of a mutual friendship.

Toxic Mentoring

It seems negative to have to talk about bad mentoring relationships, yet it is important to do so. Mentoring relationships are powerful. That power can be used for good or for ill. Mutual respect and trust, healthy balancing between dependence and independence, wisely knowing when to hold on and when to let go, and knowing when influence merges into control takes maturity. Not every mentoring relationship goes entirely smoothly.

There are toxic mentors and toxic learners.

Toxic mentors come into the relationship with their agenda and needs being the top priority. A toxic mentor seeks to control, impose his goals for the person, and mold the person to be like him, and he usually resents the learner growing to be his peer. The toxic mentor will use manipulation, threats, or shaming to get his way. The toxic mentor has little or no capacity to listen without judging or to let go.

A toxic learner is one who idolizes the mentor and puts him on a pedestal. A toxic learner also finds ways to hold the mentor responsible for his growth. The toxic learner will not want to grow in independence and will see attempts to make him more independent as rejection. The toxic learner often sees the mentor in extremes, either as a great hero or a complete failure.

The best thing to do if you find yourself in a toxic mentoring relationship is to confront that dynamic gently but quickly and remove yourself from the relationship. You perhaps can help the other person find a relationship that would be more healthy, but even that will be difficult to do.

Finding a Mentor

So, how do you find a mentor? Well, first, remember a mentor can come from any walk of life. Your mentor may come from somewhere you never imagined. A pastor who needed to grow in patience

found that a member of his congregation who was a plumber exhibited that fruit of the Spirit in a remarkable way. The pastor approached that plumber, and through weekly breakfast meetings the plumber mentored his pastor in the grace of patience.

Selecting a mentor begins in prayer. Then, search your own life to see in what way and what area of your life you are seeking a mentor. Then seek someone who is an example of maturity or expertise in that area. Select someone you admire, who shares your values and your sense of integrity. Select someone who is an encourager rather than a critic. Select someone who will respect you and genuinely rejoice in your growth.

Establishing a Mentoring Ministry

Congregations can help foster healthy mentoring by enlisting and training a corps of mentors, much as care givers like Stephen Ministers are recruited and trained. Men and women who are mature and caring can be given special training and offered as mentors. People seeking a mentor can be told that the congregation can help match them with a suitable mentor.

Having the staff speak about mentors in their lives can show the value of mentoring relationships. Ideally each pastor, teacher, DCE, or other church professional can find a mentor to work with him or her. People will follow their leaders.

The School Ministry Department of

the Board for Congregational Services has developed an excellent mentoring ministry model for school staffs. It is called School Leadership and Mentoring (SLAM). This ministry helps develop peer mentoring groups among Lutheran educators across the synod. Contact your district education executive for more information about this ministry.

Mentoring: A Lutheran Thing to Do

In writing the Smalcald Articles in the heat of the Reformation, Dr. Martin Luther shared the richness of the Gospel and the ways in which God wanted that Gospel to touch and mold our lives. He wrote, "We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally, *through the mutual*

conversation and consolation of brethren. Matthew 18:2, 'Where two or three are gathered . . .'" (*The Book of Concord*, p. 310, emphasis added).

That "mutual conversation and consolation of brethren" is what we have been calling mentoring. It is a ministry of encouragement, guidance, and care, centered in the Gospel promise of Christ.†

Helpful Resources on the Ministry of Mentoring

Kosberg, J. M. () "Mentoring:

Sharing the journey." St. Louis:

Concordia Publishing House

Hunt, S. (1993). *Spiritual mothering:*

The Titus 2 model for women

mentoring women (2nd ed.).

Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books.

Hendricks, H. G., & Hendricks, W.

(1995). As iron sharpens iron:

Building character in a mentoring relationship. Chicago: Moody Press.

Daloz, L. A. (1990). *Effective teaching*

and mentoring. San Francisco,

Jossey-Bass.

School Vouchers: Toward Informed Opinion

Dr. William Rietschel teaches in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at Concordia University, River Forest, IL. His speciality fields and interests are in the history of education, professional ethics, and school law.

The idea of parental choice in education is not new. Since 1925, when the United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* that an Oregon statute requiring all children to attend public schools was unconstitutional, parents have had a constitutional right to educate their children in private or parochial schools (Kemerer, Hairston, & Lauerman, 1992, p. 601).

The current wave of choice fervor stems from a timely confluence of developments—cultural, economic, and political. Among these developments are: (1) widespread concern about the quality of elementary and secondary education; (2) diminished confidence in the effectiveness of government and, hand in hand, increased faith in the comparative ability of private institutions; (3) growing apprehension of international threats to American economic superiority; (4) persistent pressure to ease tax burdens, especially those on the middle class; and (5) resentment on the part of parents who want to provide their children education delivered through religious institutions that opting for such an alternative forfeits economic benefits accruing to families using public education (Rofes, 1992, p. 509).

Variety of Definitions

The term “school choice” covers a wide variety of programs and plans. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between and among the wide variety of meanings the term has acquired.

Viewed from the perspective of those who consume educational services (parents, children and taxpayers), education in the United States is not a matter of “choice”: it is compulsory. Every state requires children to attend school, and will prosecute parents who refuse or neglect to educate them. As a result, the first choice is not whether to educate the children (that is already required) but how.

There are only two choices widely available: attend a school run by the government and funded by tax dollars, or attend a school which is run and funded, either in whole or in part, by the private sector (including home schooling) or a religious body.

Choices within the government run, managed and funded educational system, include neighborhood choice, inter-district choice, state-wide choice, enrollment lotteries, pair, clusters and magnet schools, charter schools, and a host of other options designed to make the public school systems more responsive to the constituency, including private management. The debates over

these kinds of choices generally relate to equity, political culture, and effectiveness in the existing public school system. Much of that particular debate has taken place over the issue of school desegregation and finance reform. (Ariens & Destro 1996, p. 483)

Constitutional Concerns

By far the most controversial school choice plans are those which include the option to select a parochial school, such as a Lutheran elementary or secondary school, which teaches religion as an integral part of its curriculum.

Obviously, one significant problem

within this controversy is the Constitution of the United States, specifically the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment. There is simply no escaping the fact that religious schools provide religious education, and one cannot brush

aside constitutional problems.

Notwithstanding its explicit 1983 endorsement in *Mueller v. Allen* of at least some forms of tax relief for parents who choose religious schools, the Supreme Court’s decisional legacy regarding either approving or disapproving state aid to religious schools remains a muddle. For example, the Court has ruled “unconstitutional the use in religious schools of state funds for

By far the most controversial school choice plans are those which include the option to select a parochial school, such as a Lutheran elementary or secondary school, which teaches religion as an integral part of its curriculum.

instruction in secular subjects; . . . therapeutic services or counseling; instructional supplies or field trips; public school teachers who teach secular subjects on a part-time basis in religious schools; maintenance and repair of facilities; and tuition reimbursement.” The Court has “upheld the use of state funds for secular textbooks; bus transportation; speech, hearing, and psychological diagnostic services; standardized texts in secular subjects; and translators for deaf students.” And most recently, in *Agostini v. Felton* (1997), the Court overturned an earlier decision prohibiting the delivery of Title I services by public school teachers in religious schools. Seemingly, it now passes constitutional muster to provide remedial instruction to disadvantaged children in parochial schools.

Applying the test developed for evaluating the constitutionality of government action under the Establishment Clause in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), it would appear that generally “the Court has rejected state aid that has the purpose or primary effect of aiding or promoting the religious mission of parochial schools . . . or that requires so much supervision to ensure that it is not used for religious purposes that it entangles church and state.” On the other hand, when state funding to religious schools has withstood the Court’s scrutiny, it has “sometimes” been “justified on the grounds that the benefit went to students and their families rather than to the schools, but in every case it was important that the funding went to students attending public as well as

religious schools—so that it was awarded neutrally—and that it served secular purposes, albeit in the context of religious schooling” (Nord, 1995, pp. 368-69).

There may then be reason to believe that the Supreme Court would uphold a properly crafted voucher plan. After all, there are “a variety of secular purposes to be served in giving parents the choice of where to school their children - increasing competition, enhancing family values, or enlarging the domain of freedom, for example.” An argument can be made that to “exclude religious schools from voucher plans would be to violate” the neutrality required by the First Amendment “by discriminating against religion” (Nord, 1995, p. 371). Furthermore, could not one argue that the state may enact legislation to further the free exercise of religion? Ultimately, is that not the purpose of the First Amendment?

“By giving parents a voucher they might use for religious or secular schooling, the government cannot be said to be endorsing religion; it is the parents, not the government, who endorse religion by virtue of their private choices. Could it not be said that channeling state aid through private individuals withdraws the seal of governmental approval? It probably does, but that still doesn’t settle the question of whether vouchers have the effect of aiding religion “by subsidizing religious education and by creating incentives for children to attend sectarian schools” (Nord, 1995, p. 371). Might not vouchers merely be facades for promoting religion?

And what of the wall of separation?

Would vouchers jeopardize the principle of church-state separation because Americans would effectively be forced to pay taxes to maintain private religious schools? Wouldn't this amount to a church tax? Many would answer in the affirmative.

Of course, one will not find the "wall of separation" in the Constitution. Borrowing it from Thomas Jefferson, the Supreme Court introduced the concept in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) together with the language of neutrality in its analysis of the Establishment Clause. If one understands the First Amendment in terms of neutrality, not strict separation, an argument can be made for the constitutional permissibility of vouchers. If a voucher plan is substantively neutral between religion and non-religion, if it doesn't put government in the position of encouraging or discouraging religion, then the Establishment Clause might be satisfied. "A plan that provides the same funding for students in religious schools and secular private and public schools," it can be asserted, "would neither encourage nor discourage religion relative to the governmentally uninfluenced choices of parents" (Nord, 1995, p. 373)

Be that as it may, "the 'separation' of church and state is guaranteed by the fact that it is parents, individual citizens, not government, who will make the decision concerning the destination of funds. The parents stand between government and religious schools, separating them" (Nord, 1995, p. 373).

May Lutheran schools, consistent with the Constitution, be included in

voucher programs? One may argue that they may. However, some "state constitutions have amendments prohibiting the use of tax money for religious schools, so that vouchers might be unconstitutional at the state level even if they are constitutional at the federal level" (Nord, 1995, p. 373).

Autonomy Concerns

Another area of concern surrounding vouchers relates to the scope of appropriate state regulation. "Although state regulations and court decisions arose in the wake of *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, private and parochial school autonomy generally has not suffered significant erosion. Private" and parochial "schools remain largely free to operate in accord with their philosophical," and religious missions "and outside the regulatory framework imposed on public schools by state and federal law. What is important is not the limited intrusion, but that it has occurred in the absence of any significant flow of public tax dollars to these institutions" (Kemerer, Hairston, & Lauerma, 1992, p. 606).

History teaches us that our elementary and secondary schools can be regulated and still retain their Lutheran, albeit regulated, identity. However, a more far-reaching regulatory situation might arise if the courts were to find that a Lutheran school had become a state actor. A private organization may be considered the equivalent of a public entity under the Fourteenth Amendment when it performs a public function.

In the context of Lutheran schooling

and vouchers, court “rulings suggest that for state action to be present, there must be such a close nexus established between the private action and the state that little discretion is left to the private actor. There are a few cases where such a close nexus has been established” (Kemerer, Hairston, & Lauerman, 1992, p. 612). If public dollars flowing into Lutheran schools are accompanied by extensive governmental regulations, might there be cause for concern?

Given the state’s historic surrogate parent “involvement in the establishment and operation of public schooling and given the fact that a substantial portion of its budget is devoted to education, there is a possibility that the state will assert strong regulatory authority over participants in a voucher program to be assured that public interests are served.

This is most likely to be apparent when such programs move beyond the experimental or pilot stage and substantial amounts of state money are involved. The more intrusive the regulations, the more likely that at least some aspects of” Lutheran school

“operation may be found to constitute state action under the Fourteenth Amendment, thus requiring” Lutheran schools “to recognize student and teacher Liberty and Property Rights, Due Process, and Equal Protection of the

laws” (Kemerer, Hairston, & Lauerman, 1992, p. 622). Recognizing these could significantly increase Lutheran school contributions to our already highly litigious society, not to mention increased siphoning of already scarce financial resources to pay for that litigation.

Whether voters across the country “will allow taxpayer dollars to flow to largely unregulated schools still remains to be seen. It would seem likely, however, that once abuses appear in a largely unregulated system, the demand for accountability will increase” (Kemerer, Hairston, & Lauerman, 1992, p. 623).

Should a voucher program ever be established—and I am by no means saying it should be—Lutheran school leadership will need to weigh their

Should a voucher program ever be established . . . Lutheran school leadership will need to weigh their involvement in a government-financed choice plan over against the interest of maintaining our schools as distinctive alternatives to public schooling.

involvement in a government-financed choice plan over against the interest of maintaining our schools as distinctive alternatives to public schooling. It would appear important to comprehend the possible consequences of

that involvement and not proceed in the naive hope that Lutheran schools can have it both ways.

Interests Involved

Any consideration of the relationship

of religion to education, which is illustrated by the voucher issue, must be framed by the three interests involved:

1. the parents' obligation to educate their children, and their interest in raising them in the tenets of their faith or other system of belief;
2. a child's need to be socialized as a member of a larger social, economic, moral, and political community, and the rights of the young adult to make educational choices consistent with his or her needs;
3. the State's interest in the health, safety and welfare of children, in the preservation and integrity of the family, and in the preservation of a common culture, language and political tradition.

"Most of the case law which has developed since the Supreme Court began the process of defining the substantive parameters of religious liberty has its roots in disputes over the balance to be struck between and among these interests. These disputes are but the most recent chapters in an ongoing debate which stretches back to discussions in Colonial settlements over the suitability of candidates for the post of school master or teacher" (Ariens & Destro, 1996, p. 369).

It is interesting to note the appearance of elements of the three aforementioned basic interests in the major religious and moral arguments that one need consider relevant to any informed judgment about educational choice. A brief treatment follows.

Religious and Moral Considerations

Because parents have the right to send their children to private or religious schools, "the argument for vouchers is often not rooted in the theology or spiritual needs of any particular religious tradition but rather in a more universal language of moral and political rights" (Nord, 1995, p. 356). As I see it, the major argument for vouchers within this context is that "they would enable poor people to exercise the right to educate their children in accord with their moral and religious values" (Nord, p. 357). Implicit here is an argument for economic justice. The rich may choose their schools if they so desire; the poor are forced to attend the school the government selects for them. Unfortunately, a criticism of most voucher proposals is that they are not sufficiently generous to enable the truly poor to send their children to private or parochial schools.

"There are two major arguments made against vouchers and the rights of parents: the first gives priority to the rights of children; the second gives priority to the rights of the state and society" (Nord, p. 357).

Those espousing the first (giving priority to the rights of children) point out that the problem with vouchers is that parents will refuse to spend them on anything but schooling which reinforces their values rather than a neutral education within which their children can define the good for themselves. They also note that "children are persons within the meaning of the Bill of Rights. Children have rights over against their

parents, and it is the obligation of the state to protect those rights in its laws regarding education” (Nord, 1995, p. 358) , i.e., by providing its children with a neutral education.

The far more common argument against vouchers begins with the rights of society and the state. The most common theme contained within this argument centers on the maintenance of democracy and civil society. The distinctive virtue of public education is that it creates the conditions under which democracy can thrive. In a pluralistic culture we disagree deeply about the nature of the good life, but we can live together because we do share a commitment to democracy. Consequently, we have an important and common interest in supporting an educational system that teaches “democratic virtue” in schooling future citizens. “The problem with vouchers,” according to those that adhere to this perspective, “is that they leave too little room for democratic deliberation” (Gutmann, 1987, pp. 69, 30-31, 70).

One must pause to ask why, if democratic virtues and the public good are so important, voucher opponents are not, in principle at least, opponents of private and religious schooling altogether. “Most opponents of vouchers are willing to tolerate private and religious schools so long as they receive no tax money (at least for religious purposes)” (Nord, 1995, p. 360). If, on the other hand, for many of these opponents the right to private or religious schooling is sufficiently important to warrant some risk to the public good, then why should not the state subsidize that right?

Additional Issues

Other issues concerning vouchers focus on pluralism, segregation, and moral education. Are vouchers congenial to liberty and pluralism, or would they lead to exposing students to less diversity and less emphasis on the value of dissent, democracy, and pluralism? Since vouchers will almost surely be underfunded so that only middle-class people would actually be able to use them, leaving poor people, and especially blacks, to an underfunded public school system, are they not going to lead to further segregation by race and class? Perhaps educational choice is actually nothing but a smoke screen for racism. Could this not be a distressingly real possibility?

Finally, many parents who support vouchers believe that the moral values they nurture in their children are constantly undermined by the alien values of other children in public schools, by the neutrality (some say antagonism) of the official curriculum, and by the inability to eliminate violence, drugs, and alcohol (Nord, 1995, pp. 361-66). Certainly, in our Lutheran schools there is some significant sense of community and shared values that nourish the moral and spiritual education we provide. However, as our culture continues to fragment morally, will public schools continue to find it harder and harder to provide any semblance of a similar foundation of community and consensus? How will Lutheran schools fare? What is fair to expect of public schools in this regard when there are so many moral questions on which they must remain neutral?

Ultimately, what is the Lutheran's responsibility to governmental institutions such as the public school system, and is support or non-support of vouchers congruent with that responsibility?

This article was not meant to provide an exhaustive or definitive treatment of the voucher debate. There are many other arguments relevant for consideration in reaching an informed judgment about educational choice. For example, to a great extent the language of markets drives choice fervor. Does our society need to further its subservience to a market mentality? Should we be concerned about education becoming a commodity and about market solutions to problems of great cultural importance and complexity? Also, the overall relative merits of public, private, and parochial schools and the legitimacy of public perception that public schools are doing a poor job and that private and parochial schools can do it better is also beyond the scope of my competence or interest here.

Faithfulness to the Traditions of Missouri and the Nation

Are vouchers a good idea? Perhaps I have raised questions more than posited answers. If the reader is more perplexed after perusal of the foregoing paragraphs, then this article has achieved one of its objectives. If the reader remains terminally certain, then there is cause for concern. It seems to me that there are significant questions to be addressed with powerful arguments for and against them. Prior generations of American Lutheran educators have struggled to be faithful both to the fundamental traditions of our

nation and to our church body. As we work to find answers to the difficult and sometimes tempestuous issue of school choice, we should once again strive for nothing less.†

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Sex! Why Is Everyone Talking About It Except the Church?

The Reverend Roger Sonnenberg is a family psychotherapist and pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Arcadia, California. He is widely known as a speaker and a writer on marriage and family issues. He recently published 501 Practical Ways to Love Your Grandkids and Their Parents, a companion to his earlier 501 Practical Ways to Love Your Wife and Children and 501 Practical Ways to Love Your Husband and Children (all from CPH).

It happened a number of years ago but the story is still etched in our minds. The infamous football players who called themselves the Spur Posse of Lakewood, California accumulated points of status by having sexual relationships with as many girls as they could. The young men accused of the crime appeared on national television talk shows bragging about their conquests. A father of one of the boys announced that "boys will be boys" and that everyone was making too much of the incident. What the fathers failed to recognize, is that not only will "boys be boys" but also "girls will be girls." Boys and girls are having sexual intercourse at an earlier age. The average male is sexually active nine years prior to marriage while the average girl is active seven to eight years before marriage.

Politicians and speakers used the Spur Posse incident as an example of the decline of our society. Some preachers used it as an opportunity to speak about the impending damnation and doom unless there was nationwide repentance. However, few, if any institutions or individuals did anything other than condemn the boys who were involved. Nothing changed in the way they

taught sex education. For the most part, even the church has handed over its responsibility of teaching its people about sexuality to sub-contractors, such as television and movie script writers and producers.

Even the Secularists Are Asking Questions

As we read the morning news and watch the evening news we see and hear some of the concerns voiced by the secularists about what's going on in the area of sexuality. *U.S. News & World Report* asks in a feature article whether or not premarital sex is good for us. More and more "babies are having babies."

One out of every three children born today is born to an unwed mother. But the trend is not only for teenagers to have children out of wedlock, it is also true for those 20 and older. Cohabitation between a man and a woman without marriage is as common among the older adult population as it is among the

Why haven't the church and its educational arms addressed the whole issue of sexuality: it's truths, myths, and misconceptions? Why have we subcontracted out our children to others to do the job God has assigned to his church and to his people?

younger. According to an Alan Guttmacher Institute study, the adults today aren't setting a very good example for teenagers. Teenagers are only imitating the adult "sexample."

Says David Whitman (1997), "The clergy, once loquacious on the topic of

premarital 'sin,' are . . . subdued. 'Have you ever heard a sermon on 'living together'?' asks religious columnist Michael McManus in his 1995 book, *Marriage Savers*. Condemnation of adult premarital sex has virtually vanished from religious preaching, even in the homilies of Catholic priests. 'In the pulpits there has been a backing away from moralizing about sex before marriage,' says Bishop James McHugh, the bishop of Camden, N.J." (p. 60).

The article goes on to point out that the reason for such reticence on the part of the church is because most Americans have given up on the whole idea of chastity before marriage.

Experts who once advocated premarital sex are now taking another look and suggesting that premarital sex may not have been as beneficial as once thought; in fact, it may have actually caused many of the problems now

being faced in our society.

Yet such benefits may be more wishful thinking than fact. "Cohabitation may seem a good 'trial run' for a solid marriage. But in practice, cohabiting couples who marry—many of whom already have children—are about 33

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percent more likely to divorce than couples who don't live together before their nuptials. Virgin brides, on the other hand, are less likely to divorce than women who lost their virginity prior to marriage. . . . Live-in boyfriends are far more likely to beat their partners than if they were their spouses. And young adults who move in together, without being engaged to be married, are more likely to use cocaine and cigarettes after they start cohabiting than beforehand" (Whitman, 1997, p. 60).

All and all, the article suggests, maybe premarital sex isn't so good for people after all. Though the church has always known this truth from the Word of God, it remains strangely silent. Why?

Why Haven't We Responded?

Why haven't the church and its educational arms addressed the whole issue of sexuality: its truths, myths, and misconceptions? Why have we subcontracted out our children to others to do the job God has assigned to his church and to his people? Why do we allow the secular world to pummel our children with untruths that are contrary to the Holy Scriptures and the values we subscribe to?

- Could it be that we are silently whispering to ourselves, "But that's someone else's kids, not ours. Thank you, God, that our kids are not like those"?
- Could it be that we feel hypocritical

teaching our children something that we ourselves did not practice in our own early years of dating?

- Could it be that we have simply given up on teaching our children values that the secular world blatantly laughs at and suggests are antiquated?
- Could it be that we ourselves don't believe the teachings about sexuality that are offered in Scripture? That these teachings were for another time, another people?
- Could it be that, despite all the so-called enlightenment and freedom we have today regarding sexuality, we are still quite uneducated in the whole area and are embarrassed to talk about it in any way other than in a joking manner or at a surface level?
- Could it be we are simply too fearful to say anything about sex, lest we be censored by those in authority?

Often, our excuses are only attempts to skirt responsibility. These excuses cripple us from making any real difference in the way our children and our children's children think about sexuality. Statistics show that Christian young people going to Christian schools are almost as sexually active as those attending public schools. Yes, we may feel hypocritical in teaching our children something we ourselves did not practice when we were teenagers, but that does not make what they are doing any more right than when we were doing it.

Somewhere we have carried the guilt around missing the whole message of forgiveness.

Today sexual promiscuity can be a matter of life or death! It seems strange that in a world where almost every television program directly or indirectly has some teaching on sexuality, we are still somewhat embarrassed to talk about it with our own kids. Why have we farmed out our children to other institutions to do what we ourselves should be doing? Why should we entrust the media with this important task?

David Walsh in his book, *Selling Out America's Children* (1995), says the modern media have, for the sake of profit, sold out our children. The question is always, "Will it make money, how much and how fast?" Everything else is irrelevant. Whether or not its harmful or beneficial to our children doesn't matter.

"For example, a study conducted by TV Guide revealed that ninety-four percent of the sexual encounters depicted in daytime TV soap operas were between people who were not married to one another. The implied message is that sexual relations outside the context of marriage are the norm. The fact, in this particular example, that only six percent of sexual relations involved people married to one another implied a standard of behavior. This is a very subtle yet powerful value message about sexual behavior--subtle because no one is directly advocating or preaching to the

viewer that sexual activity should be predominantly pursued outside of marriage. But the implied message is clear in the numbers: ninety-four percent to six percent" (pp. 17-18).

What we are seeing is that our children are buying into a set of values that society has given to us mostly through those in charge of the media. Most of these values are subjective, leaving the kids confused. There are few absolutes. Everything is pragmatic and relative. You do certain things today and deny them tomorrow based on what is popular or what might best benefit you personally. God's Word offers boundaries. It offers absolutes, always couched in the middle of grace—God's love and forgiveness. Society can legislate behavior, but real heartfelt change comes only through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that which creates new life (Galatians 5:16-23).

The Empirical Evidence

The empirical evidence is that churches can and are making a difference in treating the ills of society. A political scientist, John Dilulio of the Brookings Institute, comments, "It's remarkable how much good empirical evidence there is that religious belief can make a positive difference." For example, "Divorce rate for regular churchgoers is 18 percent; for those who attend services less than once a year, 34 percent" (as cited in Shapiro, 1996, p.51).

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So Where Do We Begin?

The first lines of *A Tale of Two Cities* read: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." In some respects it truly can be the best of times for the church, because the church has been entrusted by God himself with the words of life, "life and . . . to the full" (John 10:10).

Churches with educational arms such as parochial schools

have a special advantage to truly making a difference in sharing the truth about much of life, including the gift of sexuality. The classroom can serve as a resource for "fine-tuning" a child's knowledge

about sex and can complement the basics that have already been received at home.

Being Proactive Instead of Reactive

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is true especially when it comes to sex education. Though comprehensive sex education has been mandated for public schools in many states, there is little evidence that it works. It doesn't work because it is not values-based. It teaches the "plumbing" of sexuality but offers little or no guidance on how to use the gift.

Studies do show, however, that behavior is modified by a values-based

sex education program. Such education includes teaching the value of fidelity along with responsibility, respect, and honesty. It includes teaching young people the truthfulness about who they are and to whom they belong: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not

your own; you were bought at a price.

Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

We are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ! "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all--how will He not also, along with Him, graciously

give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). He will give us all things, including instructions on how to use the gift of sexuality woven intricately into every one of us.

The *Learning about Sex* series from Concordia Publishing House is a perfect tool to help schools be proactive in teaching sex education. It is a series of five age-appropriate books to help parents and teachers address the whole issue of sexuality in an honest, straight forward way. These books serve as more than "ice-breakers" in broaching the subject of sex; they correctly deal with material that is age-appropriate so that no one has to

wonder if he/she is saying too much or too little. Best of all, they teach sexuality from the perspective of the Creator of sex--God himself. The five books are entitled:

1. *Why Boys & Girls Are Different* (3 to 5)
2. *Where Do Babies Come From?* (6 to 8)
3. *How You Are Changing* (8 to 11)
4. *Sex And The New You* (11 to 14)
5. *Love, Sex and God* (14 to young adult)

There is one more book in the series, entitled *How to Talk Confidently with Your Child About Sex*, which gives parents and teachers confidence and the answers they need to discuss sexual issues with their children from a uniquely Christian perspective. The book takes the parent or teacher step-by-step through the issues discussed in each book. The entire series has been updated a number of times to include additional suggestions for parents and teachers as well as the latest information on new STD's, etc.

Fortunately, in the last few years there have been many excellent Christian products produced to help teach sex education. One such resource is a video entitled *Sex Has a Price Tag*. It features the well-known and respected speaker, Pam Stenzel, addressing teenagers about everything from premarital sex to chlamydia. She herself was a result of rape.

Using the Real Power--the Gospel

The real strength of the church is its message of grace. We can talk about the life of sexual purity God wants for us; however, sexual purity is like any of the other standards God places before us. We often "miss the mark," we don't keep these standards. St. Paul's cry is ours: "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing" (Romans 8:18-19). For this reason people today work harder than ever at making excuses, blaming, accusing, shifting responsibility to someone else. It is the nature of the game--the game Adam and Eve played immediately after sin entered the world. Without Christ Jesus, we don't know what to do with this thing called sin. We don't know what to do with the guilt over the pain we have caused in others. Jesus Christ died for our sins. He paid the price so that the excuse-making can stop. Through his precious blood, there is forgiveness for sins we commit in thought, word, and deed. "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:34).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live sexually pure lives. We do not have to make excuses for those thoughts that are impure. We can confess the sin and receive forgiveness. We don't have to carry around a bag full of guilt over past mistakes because we

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can find assurance of forgiveness in His promises. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). There is no better place a person can go to hear such Good News than to the church and its educational arms. The same grace that is shared in every home by loving fathers and mothers can and must be shared in every Christian school and church as well, because in the Gospel there is power to change, to live lives we ourselves could not live. Martin Luther said, "Good works are works that flow from faith and from the joy of heart that has come to us because we have forgiveness of sins through Christ" (in Plass, p. 1499). The Christian educator helps define those works that flow out of one's faith, to teach the students "to obey everything (God has) commanded..." (Matthew 28:20). Why shouldn't we? We know the Creator himself, the Creator of sex. We know what he says about it, the beauty of it, and his guidelines for the use of this gift.

Grabbing "Teachable Moments"

A teacher's best teaching often takes place when it is done at a "teachable moment," a moment when everything is just right for teaching an important truth. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . ." (1 Peter 3:15). It might be when you discover

one of your students passing some pornographic material to another student. It might be when you've heard a group of students tell an off-color joke or upon hearing inappropriate language spoken.

Mr. Aikins teaches eighth grade. He hears the students talk about "protected sex." He "grabs the moment" to ask the students what they mean about "protected sex." They explain. He doesn't judge them. He simply talks to them about what he knows, because he's prepared himself for a time like this. He asks them, "Do you know that almost half of all unplanned pregnancies occur to women who were using contraception?" He tells them that condoms have a 16% failure rate. The standard hole in a condom is approximately 5 microns. The average sperm is approximately 50 microns as compared to the AIDS virus which is 0.1 microns. Besides pregnancy, there are myriad other things to worry about, such as the many sexually transmitted diseases. He speaks openly and honestly about the subject, but he always couches what he has to say in love. He doesn't lecture. He just loves his students as God loves them. "You know God loves you too much, as I do, to let you believe that there is such a thing as 'safe sex' other than abstinence. Don't forget he loved you enough to die for you! That's a lot . . .!"

We help our students make plans for high school, college, for major life decisions such as marriage, but for some reason we skirt around the issue of

sexuality. And yet, we know that every student will have to make important decisions in this area of life: When a boyfriend/girlfriend says, "If you love me, you'll have sex with me!" When a boyfriend/girlfriend says "Everybody else is doing it!" When a boyfriend/girlfriend reasons, "What's wrong with doing it? We love each other, don't we?" Teachers have a unique opportunity to help their students make concrete plans about how they're going to answer these challenging situations before they actually happen. It is part of what a teacher is supposed to do—prepare his/her students for the future.

Search Institute "discovered that the difference between troubled teens and those leading healthy, productive, positive lives was strongly affected by the presence of what we call developmental assets." The more of these a person has, the less likely he or she will become involved in problem behaviors such as alcohol use or early sexual promiscuity. Three of these essential assets are: 1) other adult resources (when kids have other adults besides their parents they can turn to for advice and support); 2) other adult communication (when kids have in-depth conversation with adults who are not their parents); 3) sexual restraint (when kids believe that it is important to abstain from sex) (Benson, Galbraith, & Espedland, 1995). Where could the child better find such adults than in the church community? Who, other than the child's parents, can better teach the child about

sex than those representing God—Christian pastors and teachers? One of the powerful ways to build values within a child is to help connect the children with other people who teach and advocate the same values you do, such as the church family.

The world is shouting to the church, often only indirectly, "Please help us!" and yet we're silent. Satan lies to our children and even gets us to support the lies with euphemisms such as "safe sex" and "alternative lifestyles." Our lack of support comes more from our silence than anything we do! Ray Halm (1996), president of Concordia University-Irvine, said: "What does it mean when Lutherans leave Lutheran congregations complaining that they are not being spiritually fed? It may mean the complainers have found that messages coming from their Lutheran pulpits lack a certain reality factor. That is, the messages are true and are doctrinally accurate, but the presentation of them fails to make contact with actual lives being lived--lived not in the abstract, but upon the dusty, potholed roads of real towns peopled by troubled folk. When reality is missing, mature Christian faith does not develop.

"Research conducted by Search Institute of Minneapolis and reported in 1990 raised important questions regarding the development of integrated or mature Christian faith and practice among Lutheran youth. Most troubling was the realization that lack of

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development leads to attrition" (p. 4).

Sexuality is one of the real life issues that every human being needs help in managing and using as God intended. It is one of God's great gifts, intricately woven into every man and woman, every girl and boy. When we as leaders within the church of Christ fail to address sexuality honestly and openly, we close important doors to those we teach. No matter how much we may ignore sexuality, in the real world it is not being ignored. The issue of sexuality takes on a God-given dimension only when we share with our children and our children's children God's Word on this gift! When we do, then the gift can truly be used to his honor and his glory!†

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A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.

Robert Hutchins

Effective Midweek Programs for the Congregation

Rodney Rathmann is editor of day and midweek school materials at Concordia Publishing House. A doctoral candidate in educational leadership at the University of Missouri at St. Louis, he has 13 years of experience as teacher and administrator in Lutheran schools.

One midweek program began with one person and a concern. An active member in an aging inner city congregation worried about the declining participation of children in the life of the congregation and the bold and increasing influence of gang activity in the community. She mused over the pied-piper-like charm local gang leaders held for children. Standing on the corner, these leaders lured children into gang activity with promises of toys and expensive articles of clothing. “How could the church compete with the benefits of gang affiliation?” she wondered.

Together with a prayer partner, the woman brought her concern for the children in the community before the Lord. God answered the prayer. He led these two women to design and implement a creative midweek program where children received tickets for attending worship, learning Bible verses, and successfully completing Bible study projects and activities. With accumulated tickets children were allowed to purchase from a “general store” items donated by local merchants and industries in the community.

Effective Midweek Programs

Some may judge this incentive-driven approach to be law oriented and therefore undesirable. While not perfect, this innovative approach is an effective alternative for providing children with material things, while helping them to develop relationships with Christian role models and mentors who share and live the Good News of Jesus Christ.

What is a Midweek Program?

Midweek programs (also called weekday schools) are opportunities for faith nurture and growth offered primarily for those children who do not attend a Christian day school. Midweek sessions often convene evenings or afternoons at the conclusion of the school day. The students who attend come from the sponsoring congregation and also from the community. The purpose of the program is to share the Good News of the forgiveness, new life, and salvation Jesus earned for us through his life, death, and resurrection; to build Christian relationships among participants and with leaders in an inviting, engaging atmosphere; and to help children learn and apply to their lives the teachings of the Christian faith.

For many congregations, midweek is

an effective means for breathing new life and vibrancy into the church. Often, midweek programs serve as an effective vehicle for outreach as member children invite friends from the community.

LCMS Director of Child Ministries, Judy Christian, calls midweek programming “an exciting way to grow a congregation, because the family can become involved.”

Each midweek program is unique, responding to the needs, goals, and resources of the sponsoring congregation. However, the following elements are common to most midweek programs:

- **Instruction in God’s Word.** Some form of instruction in God’s Word is the foundation for every midweek program. Most congregations devote 20 to 75 minutes weekly to the study of God’s Word.
- **Worship.** Participants hear God’s Word read and explained; they talk to God in prayer and praise him for his goodness to us through Christ Jesus. All participants may assemble at the beginning and/or conclusion of each session for a large group

worship experience, or they may worship God as they meet together in classes.

- **Positive relationship development.**

Some midweek programs that have organized students into teams have found that students who work together tend to reinforce positive behaviors in one another to the end that discipline issues are often dealt with by the students themselves without teacher intervention. Young people also benefit from relationships they build with other significant adults, such as teachers or group leaders who encourage young people individually and collectively in their relationship with their Savior. Parents, and especially single parents, value the relationships their children are able to build with caring adults who are positive role models. These relationships are especially significant in situations where children live many miles away from grandparents and other members of their extended family.

- **Evening meal or snack.** Children and young adolescents are usually hungry in the late afternoon. Thus, most midweek students are hungry when they arrive. In some congregations, volunteers take turns serving nutritious snacks (fruit, cheese, crackers, fruit juice, etc.). Other congregations provide an evening meal. Some make this an inter-generational or family affair,

especially when midweek programming includes adult activities such as Bible class and choir.

Students may pay for their meals, parents may take turns preparing meals, or an organization in the congregation may prepare meals from donated food. Some congregations organize “table parents” to sit with a “table family” comprising midweek participants of various ages. In addition to supplying food for the body, mealtime provides opportunity for children to establish new relationships with persons of various ages who are fellow members of the body of Christ.

- **Music.** Many active midweek programs involve students in voice or bell choirs. To heighten interest, students participate in Sunday morning worship services on a regular basis in some congregations. Music provides an excellent opportunity for children to invite their unchurched family members to worship.
- **Recreation.** Some midweek programs incorporate an unstructured but supervised time for students to “burn off energy” when they first arrive. Others schedule recreation (sometimes structured) to illustrate a point from the lesson theme of the day. Some programs ask parents to lead a series of sessions on archery, golf, basketball, or other sports.

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- **Arts and crafts.** Carefully planned art and craft activities capture the interest and imagination of midweek attendees. The finished product also serves to apprise parents and family members of the theme of the Bible story. Families can then discuss God's Word at home.
- **Service projects.** Some programs build mini service projects into their programs, providing opportunities for students to put their faith into action. Possible activities include doing church and grounds maintenance projects, collecting items for recycling, helping a family move, or visiting nursing homes, hospitals, and other institutions.

Why Sponsor a Midweek Program?

The most important benefit midweek programs have to offer is the all-important, saving Gospel. In effective midweek programs, not only is the Good News of Jesus told and celebrated, but it is also put into practice in the activities and relationships fostered as essential dynamics of the program.

Commenting on the crying need for adults to impart sound ethical values to children, educator Thomas Lickona (1993) reflects, "Adults must promote . . . morality by teaching the young, directly and indirectly, such values as respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and civic virtue; and that these values are not merely subjective preferences but that they have objective

worth and a claim on our collective conscience" (9). Through midweek programs, Christian values and behavior are taught and modeled as a Spirit-motivated, Spirit-empowered response to the Gospel.

Minneapolis-based Search Institute affirms the need for positive intervention on the part of individuals, families, congregations and other community organizations to help young people develop assets necessary to withstand negative influences and behaviors. In a 1996 publication titled, *Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth* (3), Search Institute lists the following major societal changes as contributing to the failure of many young people to develop healthy assets:

- Most adults no longer consider it their responsibility to play a role in the lives of children outside their nuclear family.
- Parents are less available for their children because of demands outside the home and cultural norms that undervalue parenting.
- Adults and institutions have become uncomfortable articulating values or enforcing appropriate boundaries for behavior.
- Society has become more and more age-segregated, providing fewer opportunities for meaningful inter-generational relationships.
- Socializing systems (families, schools, churches, etc.) have become more isolated, competitive, and

suspicious of each other.

- The mass media have become influential shapers of young people's attitudes, norms, and values.
- As problems—and solutions—have become more complex, more of the responsibility for young people has been turned over to professionals.

Search Institute challenges all of us to create communities where all young people are valued and valuable, problems are more manageable, and an attitude of vision, hope, and celebration pervades community life.

The 40 assets identified by Search Institute include many factors that can be promoted through a quality midweek program:

- Other adult relationships
- Caring school climate
- Parent involvement in schooling
- Community values youth
- Youth given useful roles
- Service to others
- Safety
- School boundaries
- Neighborhood boundaries
- Adult role models
- Positive peer influence
- High expectations
- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Religious community
- Caring
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Restraint
- Planning and decision-making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Resistance skills
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Personal control
- Self-esteem
- Sense of purpose
- Positive view of personal future

When Do Midweek Programs Meet?

Christian education consultant Heather Olsen-Bunnell (1996) comments, "One of the key strategies in reaching unchurched Baby Boomer (those persons born between 1946 and 1964) and Baby Buster (born between 1965 and 1985) families is offering this outreach ministry any day but Sunday! Robert Raikes began the first religious education program (Sunday school) in 1780 on Sundays, because that was the one day of the week when children were not working. The challenge for growing churches today is to find the best time to reach unchurched children. It will be different in each community. In one small town, Friday night is best: parents drop off their children while they do their weekly grocery shopping. In an area of high unemployment, Monday night is best" (1).

Many families have a tighter schedule during the week that makes midweek attendance more likely than on Sunday. Christian education

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programming also works better during the week because many children whose parents are divorced are able to attend Sunday church activities only every other Sunday due to shared custody. One additional benefit to having a program of Christian nurture on a day other than Sunday is that it provides a greater likelihood of the pastor being able to visit and, at least periodically, take an active part in the program.

Nevertheless, some midweek programs do meet on weekends. First Lutheran Church in Little Rock, Arkansas has reserved Saturdays from one to four p.m. for midweek activities for students in grades four through six. During school breaks, however, First Lutheran offers activities for every age group each day!

There is no one day of the week that is better than another for midweek programs. The important consideration is to choose a desirable day and time according to the needs and convenience of the majority of people in the community the program will serve.

Effective Approaches to Midweek Programming

Midweek programs operating around the country represent a wide variety of

approaches. Some congregations use midweek programs as provided or adapted from various sources. Others use their own creativity to adjust their congregation's traditional midweek to meet the changing needs of their community. But, as one midweek leader put it, all effective midweek programs help "people to know God loves them enough to give his only Son for them and to make us a part of his family through the working of the Holy Spirit."

Bonnie Barton of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Garden Grove, California,

describes her congregation's midweek program in an ethnically diverse community. Providing supper, singing and worship, and a Bible study time, St. Paul's midweek program has helped to make one congregation of many different kinds

of people. Bonnie believes that one of the factors contributing to the program's success is that adults and children eat and worship together and then go to their separate Bible study classes, so that everyone is doing the same thing at the same time.

Our Savior Lutheran Church in Glendive, Montana, finds its location across the street from the grade school and junior high school to be of great

In effective midweek programs, not only is the Good News of Jesus told and celebrated, but it is also put into practice in the activities and relationships fostered as essential dynamics of the program.

advantage. Each Wednesday approximately 60 children walk from their school to the church for midweek. Many attendees are latchkey children who would otherwise go home to empty houses. Judy Williams (1996) reports that following a snack "children in grades one through four have choir, while students in grades five through eight meet with the pastor to learn about the liturgy. From time to time the younger group sings during a church service. And every month there is a special activity planned. One month it might be a servant activity and the next month a fellowship event for the kids . . . Special activities also have included excursions to the skating rink and bowling alley" (25).

LOGOS is a midweek program that stresses four essential components: Bible time, recreation, worship, and a meal. It gathers congregation members of all ages together at the same time each week for Christian nurture, relationship building, and fun.

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Kansas, recently completed their fifteenth year of LOGOS. Pastor Thomas Mendenhall describes LOGOS as "a design for inter-generational 'body building' that puts Acts 2:42 into practice. Luke writes, 'They devoted themselves to the apostles, teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.' Bible time coincides with the apostles' teaching, fellowship with the relationships shared during recreation, the breaking of bread describes the LOGOS

meal, and prayer relates to the music and worship time." Mendenhall reports that their program serves 150 children in preschool through grade eight and 30 young people in high school—a total of 90% of those who are eligible for participation. "The LOGOS program has helped arrest the idea that eighth grade is a time of graduation," Mendenhall says, "because whoever graduates from the need for Christian nurture?" The LOGOS program at Our Redeemer meets for three and a half hours once a week for 25 weeks a year. At the concluding service of their fifteenth year, Pastor Mendenhall baptized seven children.

Shirley Fuszner, who is active in the LOGOS program at Concordia Lutheran Church, Kirkwood, Missouri, says that LOGOS is instrumental in bringing children who attend many different schools together to form one big family. She describes the important connection between LOGOS and worship, pointing out that the program "familiarizes young people with parts of worship so they feel at home on Sunday mornings."

Some congregations are experiencing success in adopting the club approach to midweek programming. Immanuel Lutheran Church in Parkers Prairie, Minnesota, has been using a program called WINGS (Witness IN God's Service). "The WINGS club approach was developed by a group of Lutherans in Cedar Falls, IA," Immanuel's pastor, Rev. Lee Kirk, explains. "The program consists of three,

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one-half hour components. Designed for kids from age three through grade six, participants move from each of three sites corresponding to the three components of the program. With WINGS, kids love to learn Bible verses and do so at their own pace. The program helps them prepare for confirmation." The three components of WINGS are listening time when students recite and discuss Bible verses on a one-to-one basis with an adult mentor, group time (which includes Bible story time, music, prayer, and honors recognition), and recreation time.

Innovative Approaches to Midweek Programming

Most innovative approaches begin with an unmet need and a desire to fulfill it. Concerned congregational members ask themselves, "What can we do to share the love of Jesus, given the needs and concerns affecting our congregation and community?" Needs and concerns may focus on issues of latchkey kids; Biblical illiteracy; sports, music, and drama programs; and tutoring.

Some congregations providing extended school care programs for children have incorporated elements of midweek programming, building Bible story time, craft time, worship time, and relationship building recreation into the weekly schedule.

Using a new CPH resource for coaches called *Win the Prize*, Christian coaches have begun to bring elements of Christian nurture onto the playing field as

a meaningful part of a church- or school-sponsored athletic program. Athletic programs with a faith-nurture emphasis are also likely to involve men. Christian male role models are especially important in a society where one in three families live in single parent households. Similar approaches are being taken when congregations sponsor music and drama programs, often stressing the connection between music and drama and Sunday worship. According to Kid's Club advocate Heather Olsen-Bunnell, "Children's music is a bridge that brings unchurched families to worship" (2).

Another innovative approach to midweek programming involves children meeting one-on-one with adults one or more afternoons per week to receive help with their homework. In addition, they spend time learning Bible stories and worshipping and praying together.

One aim shared by many who apply their creativity and resources to designing an effective midweek ministry is the desire to assist families in the congregation and community to meet some basic need, while helping people, especially children, to know more about Jesus and his love.

Creativity and innovation are among God's many gifts to his people. Those working to design quality, winsome programs with a new twist echo the sentiment expressed by the apostle Paul when he wrote, "To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to

win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9: 20-22).

Midweek programs require much by way of energy and resources, but as God's Word is taught, the rewards are tremendous. Much good can come from insignificant beginnings--insignificant beginnings such as one person and a concern.†

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Advice for Managing School Technology

- Set your goals first, then consider tools. Otherwise technology vendors will urge you to adopt goals that fit what they have to sell.
- Connect instruction and management. Improving instruction may be paramount, but technology that improves management can raise the capacity of schools to provide instruction.
- Connect people. Infrastructure that moves information between teachers and administrators — telephone, e-mail, and data networks—can increase the school's efficiency.
- Include others in the decision-making process. Each potential group of users—administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members—can contribute insight and support to improve the odds of success.
- Learn technology personally. From your own use of technology you can learn lessons about how technology can shape and serve an overall system of education.

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Children in Worship, Part 3: Analyzing the Communal Rites

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John Westerhoff's theory of "faith formation" affords the opportunity for serious reflection on the intersection of theology and the social sciences. This is not a new venture for those involved in religious instruction. Philosophies of Christian education have historically attempted to facilitate a dialogue between theology and psychology, sociology, anthropology, and the other related social sciences. However, Westerhoff's (1996) contention that the heart of "living into" one's baptism is formation, and not instruction or education, presents the challenge of integrating not only one's theology and education, but perhaps what is more important, one's theology of the Church and worship, and the disciplines of the social sciences. It is this challenge of integration which is at the heart of the research involved in the Children in Worship study.

Theoretical Foundations

Westerhoff's theory postulates that there are eight aspects of communal life which contribute to and influence the practices and experiences that are necessary for spiritual formation: (1) communal rites; (2) environment; (3) time; (4) communal life; (5) discipline; (6) social interaction; (7) role models; and, (8) language

(Westerhoff, 1992). Recognizing that the worship setting is one of the contexts in which many of the eight aspects of formation intersect, the CIW team limited its study to that setting. The previous article in this series has addressed the environmental messages of the 100 congregations visited. This article will concern itself with the aspect of communal rites. It will attempt to report the team's analysis of what currently exists in the practice of communal rites in sixty-two congregations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS), twenty-seven congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and eleven congregations of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS).¹

Referencing Willard Sperry's *Reality in Worship* (1932), Westerhoff observes that, "the church shares with many other institutions common tasks that are religious in nature, and that many of these activities are done better by institutions other than the church. The one unique contribution of the church is its cultic life. While the work of the church is real and intelligible through the life and actions of its members in daily life, *the church is clearly defined whenever and wherever people meet together to address themselves to the act of liturgy*" (Westerhoff, 1992, emphasis ours).

In discussing cultic life, Westerhoff is referring to "liturgy," a community's rites: "repetitive, symbolic, and social acts which express and manifest the community's sacred narrative, along with its implied faith and life" (Westerhoff, 1992). He makes the distinction between

"ceremonial acts," which are prescribed behaviors, and "ritual acts," which are prescribed words. Westerhoff maintains that these "liturgies," or community rites, include, "(1) rites of intensification that follow the calendar (once a week, month, or year) and shape, sustain, and enhance the community's faith, character, and consciousness, as well as increasing group solidarity; (2) rites of transition that follow the life cycle and promote meaningful passage for persons and the community from one stage of life to another; and (3) rites of initiation that induct persons into the community" (Westerhoff 1992).

The CIW Worship Checklist

On three consecutive Sundays the Children in Worship research associates and assistants observed the ceremonial and ritual acts of 100 congregations. This procedure and checklist were adopted to measure the presence or absence of various liturgical elements in the worship services, and to determine what was "typical" as opposed to "special" worship experiences of children in those congregations. Following the observations the "liturgies" of the communities were grouped according to the proximity of their adherence to the public services published in the hymnals of the three denominations. Five worshipping communities which followed the prescribed ceremonial and ritual acts, and did so in "high church" fashion, were identified as being "liturgical." Twenty-seven communities which followed the prescribed rites without the "high church" fashion, were identified as

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“traditional.” Twenty-two worshipping communities which incorporated elements not reflected in the services found in the hymnal, and/or omitted particular rites from the hymnal order, were identified as “blended.” Eleven communities which combined elements from the prescribed orders of worship and other sources and conducted the service in a formal style were identified as “mixed.” Nine communities which developed their

own worship forms, or which used produced worship forms which did not reflect the orders of worship in the hymnal, were identified as “contemporary.” Two worshipping communities which conducted their worship in a less

formal style and did not incorporate many prescribed rites, were identified as “informal.” Four communities identified themselves as “other.” The research associate’s and assistant’s judgement and the community’s self-labeling were the sole criteria used in grouping the worshipping communities liturgies. Future data collection may need to incorporate clearer descriptions of worship styles, and will most likely refine the number of groupings. The denomination with the greatest variety of liturgies was the LC-MS, with the WELS evidencing the least. The percentage of each denomination

represented in the study undoubtedly influenced this finding.

The “Ceremonial Acts” listed on the checklist included various elements which reflected the role or participation of children in worship and the role models offered to them. The list included children’s message, children’s song, children accompanying parents to the communion rail, children named in prayers, special accommodations for

children, and children’s and layperson’s involvement in worship activities (reading, singing in a choir, ushering, acolyting, etc.).

The “Rituals” listing included such elements as formal processional, kneeling for confession and/or prayer, standing at

the appropriate times, making the sign of the cross, Gospel procession, celebration of Holy Communion, lay reader participants, and use of hymnal, Bible, and/or worship folder.

The “Ritual Acts” listing included the various elements identified in the Service with Holy Communion forms in the three hymnals, with the addition of the tolling of the bell, processional, and recessional.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the observations are limited to the congregations visited, on

The excitement in the voices of children saying the Lord’s prayer for the first time or singing a portion of the liturgy with us reinforces the fact that as our children worship with us they are learning the words and ways of God’s people.

those particular Sundays, for the particular services, and must not be generalized to all worshipping communities. However, the findings may reflect the experiences of children in many Lutheran congregations.

Ceremonial Acts:

In about 40% of the worship services a children's message was included; 20% of the services included a children's song; 43% of the time an adult leader greeted the children; and, in about 80% of the services the children accompanied their parents to the communion rail during distribution.

Children rarely heard their names spoken during the public worship of their community. The occasion for it being spoken was more likely to be because of sickness or in observance of their birthday rather than their in remembrance of their baptism

birthday. In 30% of the communities the preacher included comments to the children during the message. Children's bulletins have found their way into approximately 40% of the congregations. On average, a little more than one in four services included children singing in a

choir during worship. However, this was the second highest opportunity for children to participate in worship. Sixty percent of the services had children

serving as acolytes, the highest occasion of participation of children, while seldom did children serve as ushers (28%), crucifer (6%), instrumentalist (6%), book bearer (2%), or banner bearer (2%). The participating older children and youth serve as role models for the younger children, indicating what they some day may be doing as participants in worship.

In comparing congregations with schools and/or early childhood centers with congregations which had neither, one discovers that the level of children's participation increased when a congregation maintained a school or early childhood center. This increased participation was evident in the number of services with children singing in a choir.

Rituals:

In communities when holy

communion was being celebrated, 43% of the services included in the rituals a procession, many of which included children. In less than 10% of the communities did participants kneel for confession or prayer. However, in every community the

In comparing congregations with schools and/or early childhood centers with congregations which had neither, one discovers that the level of children's participation increased when a congregation maintained a school or early childhood center.

participants stood at the appropriate times. In less than 10% of the services did participants make the sign of the cross at the points indicated in the traditional

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worship service, or observe a Gospel processional. When lay readers were incorporated into the service, they were generally white males. However, in 47% of the services observed the lay readers were female, and about 10% of the time the readers were black. Ninety-four percent of the Eucharist assistants were white males.

In more than 50% of the communion services observed the hymnal was not used as a guide for worship, while in only 20% of the services was it used in reading or chanting the appointed psalm. However, in 80% of the services the hymnal was used for the singing of the hymns. Fourteen percent of the services included using the Catechism portion of the hymnal in worship. Fifty percent of the services included the opportunity to use the pew Bible. Eighty-eight percent of the services included the use of a worship folder.

During services when communion was not being celebrated, (1) processionalists were less likely to have been observed, (2) kneeling was not a part of the community's rituals in more than 90% of the communities, (3) the pastor was the only one making the sign of the cross in 92% of the communities, (4) the hymnal was used in half of the services as a guide for worship but was used in 75% of the services for singing hymns, (5) the pew Bible was used during less than half of the services, and (5) the Catechism portion of the hymnal was referenced in only 15% of the services, while (6) more than 80% of the services observed included the use of a worship folder.

Ritual Acts:

The following is an average of the percentages of ritual acts observed in the congregations during a communion service:

Tolling of the bell	37%
Greeting	95%
Call to worship	69%
Processional	43%
Opening hymn	96%
Invocation	89%
Confession and Absolution	89%
Entrance rite:	
Introit	36%
Hymn	69%
Kyrie	54%
Hymn of Praise	61%
Collect of the Day	65%
Readings	100%
Psalmody	40%
Sermon	100%
Creed	83%
Offering	100%
Offertory	85%
Preface and Proper Preface	57%
Sanctus	48%
Lord's Prayer	99%
Words of Institution	100%
Exchange of Peace:	
Spoken	30%
Hand shake	53%
Agnus Dei	52%
Salutation	60%
Benediction	99%
Closing hymn	90%
Bell-chimes	12%

During non-communion services the elements listed above that remained at constantly high percentages included: an opening hymn; the invocation; confession

and absolution; a sermon; a creed; the offering; the benediction; and, a closing hymn. The non-communion worship folders have not been reviewed for this analysis. The information reflects data reported by the associates and assistants on the checklists.

In reviewing the ritual acts, it becomes apparent that in many worship settings several of the traditional liturgical elements were missing.

However, in every setting there were readings, a sermon, singing, and an offering. The most prevalent participation in worship by children was in their serving as acolytes.

Initial Implications

In reviewing Westerhoff's concern for cultic life and the role that community acts play in spiritual formation, it becomes evident that a greater degree of attention must be paid to the experiences of children in worship. It is a marked improvement from the past that in 40% of the services observed a children's message is included. However, in 60% a children's message was not observed. A future area of study may be an examination of the content of children's messages and the children's perceptions of that content. However, regardless of the conclusions of the future study, children doubtless appreciate the fact that they were

included in the service, and that special attention was paid to the ones for whom much of worship is observed rather than done. With the increase in the number of children's messages, there is hope that a children's song may someday become a regular part of a community's ceremonial acts. With the dominant role that singing plays in the worship experience it is imperative that children participate as early and as often as possible.

A ceremonial act that one would

expect to regularly observe in the worship life of a denomination that practices infant baptism is the celebration of baptism birthdays, at least the inclusion of a prayer of thanksgiving and for preservation and continued protection, along with prayers for the

What attitudes of worship are we teaching when children experience worship as spectators rather than active participants? The various rituals in liturgical worship afford opportunities for children to catch the wonder and majesty of worship.

parents and sponsors. The practice of praying for the catechumens may need to be expanded to include all baptized children of the congregation on the occasion of the remembrance of their baptism.

For children the rituals carry much of the message of the worship experience. Worship postures communicate much about what is going on to the young child; kneeling for confession and prayer, standing for the liturgy and Gospel reading, all communicate appropriate worshipful attitudes that are caught by the

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child. The noted absence of many of these rituals in many of the communities should be a cause for concern. What attitudes of worship are we teaching when children experience worship as spectators rather than active participants? The various rituals in liturgical worship afford opportunities for children to catch the wonder and majesty of worship.

Luther's admonition that Christians should make the sign of the cross to remind themselves of their baptism and as a witness to their neighbors should be assessed in light of the fact that in fewer than 10% of the services was this ritual observed.

The increased use of worship folders at the expense of children being introduced to the content and workings of the hymnal may concern some. An artifact of the Christian community that at one time was a pocket size home devotional resource as well as an aid in corporate worship, is falling into greater disuse. Few communities are introducing their children to the storehouse of devotional materials found in the hymnal. Its use has been relegated to the singing of hymns, and in some communities not even that. Less than 14% of the services observed incorporated a portion of the Catechism section of the hymnal in the worship experience. Will children be aware of the Christian Questions and Answers, daily Bible reading calendar, and the variety of worship and devotion forms found in the hymnal when they are used primarily for singing? One would hope to see an increase in the use of the Bible during public worship. In more than half of the services observed the

Bible was not used. What do these rituals or their absence teach children? How important are these tools of the worshiping community?

In reviewing the findings from the ritual acts checklist one recognizes that in some communities some elements of the liturgy are also falling into disuse. In some worshiping communities, the name into which the children were baptized is not spoken at the beginning of worship. The absence of the majestic elements of worship such as a processional, Gospel procession, and recessional may contribute to the lack of celebration that reportedly marks some worship experiences. Often these rituals communicate to the children present the glory and majesty of the occasion of worshiping God. Corporate gestures, such as making the sign of the cross and the exchanging of peace before reception of the sacrament also model for children the relationship that exists in the community. It does appear that there are a few rituals of worship upon which children can always depend: readings, sermon, and offering. Are these the primary acts of worship with which we welcome children into the community? Predictability and dependability are two characteristics of a safe and welcoming community. What is the effect when worship experiences are not predictable, and activities are not dependable?

Westerhoff's concern for ceremonial acts, rituals, and ritual acts as significant components of spiritual formation may bring to the minds of some the threat of falling into ritualization. Westerhoff shares that concern and would allay that

fear with the encouragement to explain the rituals in the context of instruction. The fear of ritualization must not prevent us from providing the rituals and acts that afford our children the opportunity to join us in worship. The excitement in the voices of children saying the Lord's prayer for the first time or singing a portion of the liturgy with us reinforces the fact that as our children worship with us they are learning the words and ways of God's people. Indeed, the community's liturgy can be the means whereby children learn the sacred narrative and grow in their identification with this group. Intentional worship instruction must take place during the school years and be expanded upon during adulthood. However, the rituals must be done during formation.†

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1. For an overview of the organization and research methodology of the Children in Worship study, see the introductory article in the Sept./Oct.1997 issue of this journal.

Two young taxidermists stopped in front of a window and began to criticize the way an owl had been mounted. "His eyes just aren't natural," said the one.

"Look at the way his feet are grasping that limb," said the other. "Whoever stuffed this bird didn't know anything about owls. And those feathers look terrible." Just then the owl flew down from his perch, turned his head, and winked at them!

It's easy to criticize, but criticism sometimes betrays a lack of knowledge or experience about a subject. That's often the case with criticism of schools. Media coverage of schools can sometimes be overwhelmingly negative. Negativity sells.

Mike Rose's *Possible Lives* (1995) offers a refreshing antithesis to that. His conclusions lend support to the work done by the thousands of good administrators and teachers across the country. The book also serves as a kind of informal checklist of what works in schools.

Rose, a lifetime educator, spent three and a half years traveling around the country to visit schools. He observed pre-schools through high schools. He tried to strike a demographic balance among urban centers, medium-sized cities, small towns, and rural settings. The one exception he made to this balance was that he more often chose schools that served large numbers of students from poor and working classes, since those schools are most often the focus of public concern.

Typically, Rose visited classrooms within a school for a week or two. He talked extensively with students, teachers, and administrators. He lived in the homes of teachers or others involved in the schools. He learned as much as he could about the surrounding community by going to restaurants, markets, shops, and community functions. He got insight about the schools and their staffs from both inside and outside the schools.

Among the factors which the author cites as being common among the best classrooms was that they were safe places. While a feeling of physical safety is imperative, there was also a safety from insulting remarks. He quotes a middle school student from Chicago who said, "They don't make fun of you if you mess up" (Rose, 1995, p. 413).

Connected to this was a feeling of respect for the students. This involved fair treatment, decency, and an absence of intimidation. But it also involved respect for the intelligence of students. A New

Administrative Talk

by Glen Kuck

York principal remarked, "It's not just about being polite—even the curriculum has to convey respect. It has to be challenging enough that it's respectful" (Rose, 1995, p. 414).

The good schools Rose observed took students seriously as intellectuals. Young people were made to work hard, to think things through. The teachers required thought, participation, and effort. There were times when such effort took students to their limits. Teachers challenged students and allowed them to gain confidence. A high school student responded, "I'm just learning all this. I can't wait until I get really proficient at it" (Rose, 1995, p. 415).

The classroom teacher's authority came from more than merely the teacher's age or role. It came from multiple sources: knowledge, care, and solidarity with students' backgrounds. In general, most of the authority of a teacher was not expressed as a blunt exercise of power. A first grader said about his teacher, "She doesn't fuss a lot." Rose also observed that authority was distributed. Students contributed to the flow of events and shaped the direction of discussion (Rose, 1995, pp. 414-5). Good schools allow students to have opportunities to assume authority.

Good teachers manifested a high degree of various kinds of knowledge—knowledge of subject matter, of practice, and of the students. The acquisition of knowledge was ongoing. The teachers' pursuits of knowledge were a source of excitement and renewal for them (Rose,

1995, p. 418).

A variety of approaches were used by teachers: lecture-discussion, Socratic dialogue, laboratory demonstration, learning centers, small-group collaborative learning, and artisans' workshops in which students pursued independent projects. Teachers experimented with ways to create places where meaningful work could be done. Teachers were willing to try new things, to tinker and adjust, to fail sometimes, but to keep trying (Rose, 1995, pp. 420-1).

Lastly, teachers realized they couldn't do it alone. They had developed social relationships that enriched their teaching, gave them emotional and intellectual support, and allowed them to deal with the multiple problems teachers face. Some had developed networks with parents and others in the community that provided resources and support. (Rose, 421-2)

Critics will always abound. Schools seem to provide havens for them. But good teachers and administrators continue to work hard, knowing that their work isn't in vain. They've seen the results of their work in the development of their students. They continue to push themselves, knowing that they are in the business of affecting children's lives for an eternity.†

Reference

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For those lucky enough to have a primary age choir or to be teaching music in the primary grades, the midpoint of the year is time to begin thinking of setting goals which will prepare students for the more challenging material they will sing in the middle and upper grades. Being able to match vocal pitch accurately is basic to good singing, and it is a skill which, if at all possible, should be mastered by the time a student leaves second grade.

Why is pitch accuracy so important?

First, it improves the overall sound of a group. Adults too often assume that because children are young, their singing need not be attractive and artistically pleasing. That is not true, and such low expectations unfairly limit the potential of children.

Second, children who cannot sing in tune soon realize that they are unable to do something which many of their classmates seem to do so naturally. At this point many children decide that they “can’t sing.” Timely and supportive intervention can help children find their singing voices and prevent them from giving up on singing.

Third (and most important), each child’s voice is a potential gift to the church from the Lord, who desires that his praises be sung. Singing together in corporate worship is one of the joys of the Christian community. A little help for struggling young singers might prevent them from denying themselves that joy later in life.

Here are some simple strategies that choir directors or classroom teachers can use with their students to help uncertain singers become more secure and to reinforce good listening skills in more adept singers.

1. Guide your singers’ listening.

Directed listening is the key to achieving the goal of accurate singing. The teacher should model some attractive and unattractive sounds for the children and allow them to choose those that they think demonstrate good singing. Tell the children to watch how you stand and breathe as you produce different singing tones, and see if they can analyze how good sounds are produced. Have them sing short phrases, and ask them repeatedly, “How do we sound together?” Make sure that they can differentiate between varying modes of vocal production: “Is this shouting, singing, speaking, or whispering?” Encourage them, both individually and as a group, to speak in as many different voice ranges as possible and listen to the results. They will soon see that they are capable of making an astonishing range of sound, and that they are intellectually and

Children at Worship

by Susan Wente

physically capable of controlling those sounds.

2. Know your students' voices.

Identification of problem singers is not always as easy as one might think. Since "pitch wanderers" can easily hide in a group, it is important to hear each child sing by himself. Incorporate opportunities for listening to individual voices into every music class period. It can be as simple as playing the "Match Game." Give the class a comfortable, mid-range pitch (e.g., F or G above middle C) and call on individuals to repeat the pitch back to you on a neutral syllable. As they gain in skill, increase the match pattern to 2, 3, or 4 pitches. Lavishly praise any individual's improvement, but do not be afraid to point out honestly to the student when she is not singing the desired pitch.

Make uncertain singers your constant companions and partners in the musical experience. Never, never tell a child to sit in the back of the group and be quiet. Place these children closest to you so that they can interact with you on a moment's notice, and you can constantly monitor their progress. Encourage them to sing lightly, listening all the time.

3. Become a musical detective.

Analyze each student's singing pattern. Make the children accustomed to singing individually before their peer group. At a young age this is fairly easy to do because the children are not generally critical of one another. When a child is not singing in tune, check to see if she:

- a. has enough breath support to sustain a pitch;
- b. is able to distinguish between high, low and medium pitches;
- c. is singing too softly to engage a singing tone;
- d. is focused enough on the initial pitch to make a good start;
- e. knows the difference between speaking and singing;
- f. is not "oversinging" to the point of being unable to hear correct pitch;
- g. is maintaining a physical posture which supports good sound production;
- h. is able to vary the pitch of his/her speaking voice.

Finding the source of a child's difficulty is the first step in devising a solution for it. Future articles will discuss remedial voice activities in greater detail.†

For further reading on this topic:

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Combating Negativism in Ministry

I once heard it said, “There can be no such thing as a pessimistic Christian.” The thought is that a pessimistic Christian is an oxymoron. How can one who has hope in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior ever feel negative? How can one who has a life dedicated to teaching and sharing that hope ever struggle with negativism?

What Is Your Reason for Being Negative?

How many negative people does it take to change a light bulb? None. A new bulb is going to burn out anyway!

This attitude is present at many gatherings of DCEs and other church professionals. Often, one does not need to spend much time talking with another church worker before the issues, comments, experiences, and feelings that come floating to the surface reveal a negative outlook on the ministry and on himself or herself. Why do so many of us struggle with negativism?

Developing a list of reasons is relatively easy. “People have expectations that are just too high.” “I’m not appreciated.” “They just don’t like me!” “If it weren’t for the parents, youth ministry would be great.” “If only you knew my pastor/elder/ secretary/etc.” “God, am I really making a difference?” Maybe some of these reasons ring true for you, or maybe you have your own reasons to add to the list.

What is *your* reason for being negative? Perhaps a better question to ask yourself is, “Where is the focus in my relationship with God?” The journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land sheds light on the source of a negative attitude. The Israelites saw and experienced many works and wonders of God: the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, pillars of cloud and fire, water from a rock, manna from heaven, and a host of other miracles. Yet consistently throughout their journey, a negative attitude prevailed amongst the people. “They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?’ It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!’” (Exodus 14:11-12).

Take a moment and reread this passage from Exodus. This time, insert yourself speaking to someone about your ministry. Have you heard yourself make statements similar to those the Israelites said to Moses? If we search ourselves honestly, we must confess that we have had those thoughts or made those comments. Why do we lose hope and struggle with negativism? Be assured that God is not responsible for our loss of hope. Hebrews 13: 5 clearly states, “Never will I leave

DCE Expressions
by Eric Altenbernd, Our Redeemer, Marshall, MO

you; never will I forsake you.”

Losing Sight of God

I propose that we struggle with negativism because in some way we have lost sight of God. The Israelites were consistently negative. Whenever they lost sight of God and the reason for their calling, they became focused on themselves. They were concerned about their stomachs, their comforts, having things their way in their time. We become negative for the very same reasons as the Israelites. It may not be because of my stomach or my comforts (i.e. compensation), but many times because people do not understand or appreciate “my” ministry. The focus shifts from God to myself.

We must not lose sight of Jesus’ words in Matthew 20: 26-28: “Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” We dare not forget that our work is not “our” ministry but is ministry given to us by God, working hand in hand with the people in our congregations and communities. The root of much negativism comes when we forget that very principle.

What Can We Do?

When you are caught up in the struggle with a negative outlook, what can you do? First, take a breath and step back from the situation you are in. Ask yourself, “Why am I being negative?” Evaluate what you are doing and why you

are doing it. In other words, what is your motivation? Is there a different approach you can take? Are you really serving the person or group of people you are working with?

Second, ask yourself, “Does it really matter?” Most of the time, we must confess that what irritates us the most are those things that are furthest removed from the basic purpose of our ministry, teaching the faith. The irony is that when we evaluate our negative outlook, we will discover another teaching opportunity.

Finally, ask yourself, “What is my focus?” If all that you see is you, there is something wrong. Proverbs 3: 5-6 reminds us, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” Daily feeding on the Word is not optional in maintaining a proper focus in ministry. When our focus shifts from ourselves to our gracious God, our negativism begins to dispel.

How can one who has hope in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior ever feel negative? When we place our hope in ourselves, negativism is soon to follow. The challenge is always to place our hope in Christ and to follow His lead. Word and Sacrament are the foundations on which to build. Add the fellowship of other church workers to support, challenge, and affirm your God-given ministry. Share the struggles you encounter with your pastor, and grow through them together. Above all, place your hope in the God who promised, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”✠

The Three-Minute Rule

While I was in Australia a few months ago, I learned many things, including the “Three-Minute Rule.” Pastor Schmidt, in Melbourne, explained it to his worshiping congregation this way: all members of the congregation are to spend the first three minutes after worship talking to no one except visitors! Members are not to be “caught” talking with each other, but they are encouraged to spend the first three minutes in visiting with people they do not know and those who are visiting the congregation that Sunday.

What a wonderful idea! What if that would happen in our congregations? What if all visitors were intentionally sought out by the friendly members of the parish? Perhaps it could be overwhelming if there were only one or two visitors that day, but the whole concept of the “three-minute rule” really grabbed me.

Let’s broaden it out a bit. In order to share more intentionally the joy we have in the Lord with people around us, why not use the “three-minute rule” in the following situations:

- Spend the first three minutes when you get up in the morning greeting your spouse and family.
- Spend the first three minutes in your classroom making sure you’re connecting with the students in a friendly and forgiving way.
- Spend the first three minutes in a staff meeting checking out how your other co-ministers are doing and feeling.
- Spend the first three minutes in a church meeting focusing on the individuals around you.
- Spend the first three minutes when you arrive home making sure you give eye contact to each member of your family as well as a nice hug and smile.
- Spend the first three minutes as you hop in the car to reflect on the blessings the Lord has given you that day.
- Spend the first three minutes at the beginning of worship to reflect on the love and forgiveness we have in Jesus Christ.
- Spend the first three minutes at a reception or party focusing on those people around you who might need a special word of encouragement and support at that time.

Granted, relationships can’t be built in three minutes, decisions can’t be resolved in three minutes, and life itself is not on a three minute cycle, but to spend three minutes, or even more, to focus on our blessings, the needs of others, and the situations around us, can

Multiplying Ministries

by Rich Bimler

help us to be more intentional about rubbing ministry shoulders with others. Why not spend three minutes this day thinking of other ways you can use the “three-minute rule” in your daily lives? For example, why not spend three minutes a day making phone calls to friends who would be overjoyed at hearing your voice, or spend three minutes to write a post card or E-mail to someone you just want to greet with a friendly “blessings and joy in the Lord” type of response? Or how about spending three minutes in prayer to the Lord, or three minutes in reading a section of last week’s lessons? The Lord continues to give us 1440 minutes each

day—at least at last count. What a marvelous way to incorporate into our ministry style the “three-minute rule.” And don’t be afraid to expand it into the “five-minute rule,” or maybe even, heaven forbid, the “sixty-minute rule”!

Thanks to our Lutheran friends in Australia for ministering to us and for helping us keep sensitive to how we spend each minute of our lives focusing on the joys and blessings and gifts which the Lord surrounds us with each day!

Happy ministering—for the next three minutes—and in our ministries each day in the Lord. And now I’m heading home to invoke the “three-minute rule”!✠

“The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom.”

H. L. Mencken

“A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he gets to know something.”

Wilson Mizner

Prescriptive or Proscriptive: What Is the Message?

While leading our Luther High School North Spring 1997 elementary board of education training seminar, Dr. Richard Hermann of Wheat Ridge Ministries spent a brief section on the topic of written policies, especially as they speak to job descriptions. The participants were asked to explain, if able, the difference between the two ways of encoding: pre- vs. pro-scriptive. The reaction was rather like your own just now.

We all operate within the guidelines of both forms of directive in our lives. The question of whether one form is superior to the other is frankly moot. Both work, each in, with, and under different dynamics.

Prescription is fairly easy to grasp. It is like the medical directive, "Take two once per day." It is a pro-active statement, well suited to simple tasks. It links closely to the stimulus response mechanic that many teachers operate under. Students are told, "Study harder. You will do better." Teachers are told, "Teach better. Your students' standardized test scores will rise."

Proscription is instantly recognizable to those of us who were raised with careful study of the ten commandments. In this design the guideline is stated as a prohibition. Thou shalt not. The medical directive would be, "do not take other medicine than this for ten days." Students might be told, "Do not watch television while studying your spelling assignment." Teachers might be told, "Do not expect all your students to receive excellent grades."

In our study group we were asked to imagine what would happen if we were to encode our job descriptions for faculty and administrators in a consistently proscriptive form. (Assuming they are not already so.)

The following are some samples from a real job description written proscriptively:

1. The Executive Director shall not fail to be well informed of accepted professional standards for personnel administration and shall not fail to uphold them.
2. The Executive Director shall not fail to inform the Board of Trustees of any litigation pending against the Association.
3. The Executive Director shall not allow money to be used for purposes other than what the donor intended.

The desirable characteristic of this form is that it limits the

Secondary Sequence by Nathaniel Grunst

limitations, suggesting that there are very broad parameters for creativity in the implementation of the role. As long as the proscribed behavior is avoided, the implication is that greater freedom is available, because no further limitations are needed or, at least, stated.

The strong suit of the prescriptive descriptors is that there is a very simple form of evaluation of performance. As long as the desired and stated items are met, one can in the classic sense be graded A/B/C with the cleanness of a percentage scoring. Performance can be measured by a test-scoring machine in the twinkling of an eye and with the accuracy of multiple person input providing a basis of statistics for tight analysis. Norms can be stated. A new round of prescriptions may be created immediately, and the upward spiral on the learning curve may be described.

As all with the experience will attest, being a board member involves learning. There is a science, a body of knowledge that defines what a good board member will know and be able to do. There is a similar body of knowledge for teachers, for administrators, and surely for students. All of us must learn to operate within some form of rules and regulations. Some proscriptive guidelines one might like to see:

1. Teachers will not be addressed by combining their title with their first names, such as, Mr. Ed, Mrs. Cathy, Ms. Mary. (An exception may be made for a Regional use to reflect a special affection for an extraordinary person such as Miss Edna.)
Normative nominatives would be

Pastor Jones, Mrs. Smith, Mr. Greene, etc.

2. The first-year teacher just graduated from college will not under any circumstances give away the correct solution to any school problems. (Thus, the administrators, who earn such high salaries, will have to work their way through to the answers on their own, and with only their own meager knowledge to boot.)
Normative notions confer general omniscience with the BA degree.
3. The board member will not bring to the table an inflammatory issue as new business just before the closing prayer at 10:15 p.m. (Normative needs include sleep.)

I would like to propose a challenge to you, dear reader. A positive challenge. (Who knows, but this could become a new interactive medium.) Would you be willing to take the time to consider and formulate a proscriptive, which if applied by the appropriate person, would contribute to your *joie de vivre* or simply make your life better? Please target a teacher guideline, a student guideline, an administrator guideline, a board member guideline, and/or a pastor guideline. If you have access to e-mail, please send to <nghlsn@unidial.com> before April 15, 1998. The results will be used to create a future "Secondary Sequence."

A dearth of responses will lead to the following proscriptive: The writer will not fail to comply with the directive from the general readership of *Lutheran Education* to avoid future reference to proscriptive limitations in public.†

Opening the Mind of a Child, Part Four: Implementing Projects

OK, so I've convinced you to teach with projects. Now what? Where do you begin? It's a daunting thought that not all children will be doing or learning the same thing. How do you manage what happens as projects unfold?

Getting Started

Perhaps the most comfortable way to implement the project approach in the early childhood classroom is to begin with something familiar. If you have already developed a theme such as apples or transportation for your classroom and age level, you have a good start on a topic. The key is to go beyond the superficial and to give children the opportunity to explore in depth.

Providing for projects to emerge requires identifying several possible questions, gathering materials and tools which would be needed to explore each question, and then presenting the question in an "I wonder" format during a group discussion. You might want to identify several "I wonder" questions which could grow out of the discussion of a particular topic. Having several possibilities identified will allow you to think about materials and activities which might be needed or desirable.

The difficulty for many teachers is that projects do begin as topics, but require skill and patient coaching to move from the topic to several subsets of projects. Helping children to define questions to explore in small groups is an important part of getting projects started in manageable pieces.

Another aspect of the project approach in action is that several questions are being explored simultaneously. At the same time, not all children will be fully involved in any project. Some children may be more comfortable with materials and activities which the teacher has provided, materials and activities which look surprisingly similar to those developed for a thematic approach.

At the beginning of your work with projects you will want to set aside a regular time in the schedule for project exploration. This will also require you to have alternative activities for non-project children. It also requires that you trust that the children will learn from those projects!

Implementing a Project

Last time we used the example of apples to think about transforming a topic into a project. Let's take that idea a step

Teaching the Young
by Shirley K. Morgenthaler

further. First of all, you will need to bring real artifacts into the classroom to pique children's interest. In the case of apples, that's relatively obvious. But don't stop with just the apples themselves. You will also want to bring in picking baskets and the bushel baskets and boxes used to transport apples to market. You might also bring in foods made with apples, such as baked apples, applesauce, apple pie. You might also consider apple roll-ups, apple juice, and other apple products from the grocery store with which you think the children may be familiar.

Your work will begin with a discussion with the entire class. If you have already introduced the topic of apples, you and the children are ready to identify a list of questions for small-group exploration. An important part of starting a project is to identify all of the possible questions for exploration.

As the questions are being identified, you need to list them on chart paper for later reference and review. Be sure to list all questions, whether or not you think they are worth exploring. Think of this as a brainstorming session in which all ideas have the same worth.

Let's get back to apples. Some of the questions you have listed with the children may have to do with the physical properties of apples, such as taste, color, size, etc. Other questions may have to do with the way apples grow, how they are harvested, how apple trees produce their fruit. Still other questions may have to do with the equipment used to harvest apples, such as bushel baskets, ladders, tractors, and wagons.

If the children are not able to identify interesting questions to explore, it may be time to visit an apple tree or an orchard. It is important to remember that your task as the teacher is not to answer questions, nor to identify questions for which you confidently have answers. Rather, your task is to help children name their questions and settle on those questions they want to explore, and to provide them with the tools for that exploration. An important feature of project-approach teaching is that children are given the opportunity to select the question they want to explore. Teachers may want to provide possibilities but then allow children to identify their own interests.

Accountability and Documentation

Figuring out just what children are learning is an important part of teaching via projects in the classroom. This requires documentation. One purpose for documentation is for professional accountability and reports to administrators and parents. Another purpose is to help children identify and celebrate what they have learned. Both of these purposes can be met by carefully prepared documentation of children's work.

Children can develop journals, drawings, photographs, stories, diagrams, dioramas, models . . . the possibilities are open. Children also need to be provided the opportunity to report to the entire class what they have discovered. This reporting and celebration of learning is an important documentation of what has been learned. The responsibility for documentation is shared by the children

and the teacher.

Documentation also allows you to record, analyze, and report the skills, attitudes, and knowledge gained through project work. First of all, this means identifying the skills and knowledge required to begin the project.

As children work, you will also need to identify which skills and knowledge are actually growing out of their project work. However, it is the attitudes which may become the most important by-product of the project approach. Children's valuing of discovery, their tenaciousness to the task, their appreciation of hard work, and their joy in learning are all attitudes which can be powerfully enhanced through their work with projects.

Learning for a Lifetime

Long-term, it is children's affective education, their building of positive attitudes toward learning which will matter for their adult lives. They will have many opportunities to learn individual facts. In fact, we don't even know today which facts will be important to them in 25 years! Rather, it is their disposition toward learning which will count 25 years from now.

Give your children a gift. Teach them how to learn. Give them the joy of discovery for themselves. Help them uncover their interests and talents. Give yourself a gift, too. Allow yourself to learn with children. You may discover that learning new strategies and skills for your classroom is the most satisfying challenge you can give yourself this year!†

The important thing is not to stop questioning.

Albert Einstein

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. "

Confucius

The Gospel According to Winnie-the-Pooh

by Phil Heinze

The Gospel According to Winnie-the-Pooh Chapter Eight In Which We Go Back to School

*Hail to the green and hail to the white
Fight on there, boys, with all your might!
We cheer our Broncos to the sky,
And bring home victory for Walther High!
Fight! Fight! Fight! Victory for Walther High!*

Walther Lutheran High School was named for the Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther. All I can tell you for sure is that he lived in the 1800's and knew what it meant to be Lutheran and told everyone so. He also took about as good a picture as the Wicked Witch of the West and had stuff, like high schools and youth leagues, named after him.

The only other thing I know about Walther is that people made fun of his name. Not unlike the mascot bashing endured by the TCU Horned Frogs. We were a small school in a big city with a weird name. The other Lutheran schools had names like Central Lutheran or Luther North or Luther South. We could have been Luther West, but no. Instead of blissful anonymity we had to endure endless comments and the eternal question, "What's a Walther?"

The only reason I went there was that my family was Lutheran (not an uncommon phenomenon outside of Texas) and both my parents were trained Lutheran educators who naturally felt obliged to support Lutheran education. I wanted to go to Oak Park High and be a Husky, but instead I became a Walther Bronco.

In the end I suppose I would have had the same experience no matter where I went. When I applied myself, I did well, when I didn't I struggled. Most of the time I acted like I knew everything even when I knew I didn't. I played football and tennis but not very well. I starred in the spring musical and dated a cheerleader. I suppose the only real difference was that I shared those years with 400 or so Walther Broncos instead of 10,000 (or so it seemed) Oak Park Huskies.

"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh," said Piglet at last, "what's the first thing you say to yourself?"

"What's for breakfast?" said Pooh. "What do you say, Piglet?"

"I say I wonder what's going to happen exciting today?" said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully. "It's the same thing," he said.

(Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne, E.P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1950)

Sometimes things which seem really important at the time turn out not to be nearly as important as they pretend to be. In fact, most things can be pretty exciting if you enter them with a spirit of adventure. In the end I left Walther Lutheran with a good education, good friends, and a lot of good memories. It wasn't the place or how they did things that was so important. It was the people with whom I shared the experience.

In many ways the current debate in the church over style of worship is no different. In fact, the church has been

asking the question from at least the time of Paul (To speak in tongues or not to speak in tongues, that is the question. I Cor. 14).

In the end what really counts are the people whom God has called together and the attitude of their hearts. As far as I know, God likes Amy Grant as much as he likes J. S. Bach. It's not what you sing, it's how you sing it.

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6: 6)

If you come seeking the Lord, the Lord will find you, no matter what color hymnal you use or don't use.†

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

William Butler Yeats

"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."

Ellen Parr

A Final Word

by George C. Heider, President

"Gilding the Gospel?"

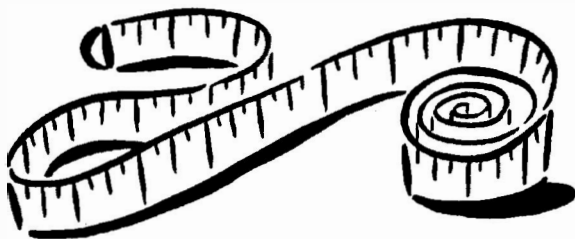
Those who know the village of River Forest are aware that many of its residents have been richly blessed in this world's goods. Still, I was truly taken aback on a recent morning jog, when I passed a late-model Cadillac which was not merely a convertible, but had a moon roof in the convertible top.

At the risk of offending the many educators who drive exactly such a vehicle (not!), I want to make something of what I saw toward a larger point. Tempting as it is, my point is not the issue of conspicuous consumption. Rather, by combining two very nice features on a fine car, the manufacturer and owner, to my way of thinking, succeeded only in "gilding the lily," that is, producing a vehicle which would have been more pleasant had it had one or the other, but not both, of the features which caught my eye.

It strikes me that we often are tempted to do the same with God's greatest gift to us: the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. How easy it is to suppose that the Gospel needs augmentation to be truly special or complete. Some are rather crass about it, teaching that Christians may reasonably expect success (or even material riches). Others are more subtle, suggesting that the Christian faith at least assures us of personal happiness and peace with those close to us. An unfortunate corollary of this view is that the lack of these things is taken as evidence of a defective faith or life (cf. Job). Still others go in a very different direction, arguing that the Gospel frees us to live without fear of condemnation, so that we can do largely as we please. A former colleague of mine put this view well: "I like to sin, and God likes to forgive, so we're both happy." Modern psychology would likely speak of this last perspective in terms of codependency; St. Paul uses somewhat different terms to the same end in Romans 6 and elsewhere.

While drawing out the implications of the Gospel for our faith and life is one of the chief tasks of theology (and Christian teaching), we dare not fall into the trap of wrapping into the Gospel itself any more than God put there: that, thanks to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sakes, we have peace with God and final victory over all that separates us from God and one another. An essential insight of Luther and his followers is that any addition to this Gospel has the effect either of making it conditional or of transforming it into Law.

In other words, the Gospel we've got is elegant in the sense of both beauty and simplicity. No gilding required.†



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